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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this survey of television viewers were to investigate their personal experiences with crime and perceived competence to deal with it, and to study their perceptions of the likelihood of crime and fears of personal victimization. Members of a London Panel maintained by the Independent Broadcasting Authority's Research Department for the purpose of routine program appreciation measurement were surveyed through the use of television viewing diaries and questionnaires. A total of 448 usable diaries and questionnaires (47% response rate) were returned. Major findings included: (1) the perceived likelihood of victimization for others and for self, and fear of victimization for self, varied with location, demographic characteristics of respondents, their direct experience with crime, and confidence in their personal ability to defend themselves in the face of an assault, while television viewing patterns were only weak and inconsistent indicators of judgments about crime; (2) no evidence emerged here that perceived risks for others were more strongly linked to media experiences than were perceived risks for self; (3) in the presence of demographic controls only, soap opera viewing emerged more often than any other program type as linked significantly to judgments about crime; and (4) viewing of particular categories of programs seemed to be less relevant to fear of crime than how much television was consumed overall. Seventeen tables, six with multiple classification or multiple regression analyses, summarize study results. (16 references) (CGD)

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TELEVISION VIEWING AND PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME AMONG LONDON RESIDENTS

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Paper Presented to the 1986 International Television Studies Conference

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* This research was carried out while Dr Wakshlag was Visiting Fellow at the IBA

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INTRODUCTION

In the long standing concern about the portrayal of violence on television, stress has usually been placed on the impact of observing the behaviour of a protagonist of violence, how purportedly sets an example of social conduct for viewers (especially the young and impressionable) to follow. More recently, however, a different perspective has emerged which focuses attention more on the meanings conveyed to mass audiences about criminal and violent propensities in society by recurring patterns of victimization portrayals on the screen. Through its repeated portrayal of violence, some researchers have argued that television cultivates distorted perceptions of the incidence of crime and violence in the real world. Such perceptions are presumed via natural extension, to produce an assortment of emotional dispositions including fear for one's personal safety, mistrusty of others, and other less specific feelings of hopelessness. Such effects are likely to be observed among those individuals who watch a great deal of television and who may therefore acquire a great deal of their knowledge about the world from it.

Empirical demonstrations of this relationship have been derived from survey data which indicate that people claiming to be heavy viewers of television exhibit different patterns of beliefs about social violence from light viewers (Gerbner et al, 1977, 1978, 1979).

For example, Gerbner et al (1979) examined fear of walking in the city in their own neighbourhood at night among a sample of New Jersey school children and individuals interviewed in two national surveys in the United States. Comparing the responses of those people who claimed to watch television for four hours or more each day and those who claimed to view for fewer than two hours, Gerbner and his colleagues found that heavy viewers in all samples were consistently more fearful than were light viewers.

Efforts to replicate Gerbner's findings among British samples, however, have so far largely failed. Two initial studies from the late 1970s conducted by Piepe, Crouch and Emerson (1977) and Wober (1978) tested relationships between levels of television viewing and personal fearfulness. Piepe et al asked people living in the

Portsmouth area to estimate the frequency of occurrence of violent incidents locally. No substantial relationship emerged between answers given and claims of viewing. Wober computed a "security scale" from responses to items concerned with perceptions of how trustworthy people are and perceived likelihood of being a victim of robbery. Results indicated no systematic tendency for heavy viewers to have lower feelings of security than light viewers.

Although the British findings have been challenged by American researchers on grounds of question wording differences and differences in relative amounts of television viewing done by people in Britain and the United States, further doubt emerged about the original American results from within the United States.

Re-analysis of Gerbner's data by other American researchers failed to reproduce his results and have revealed problems with the original methodology (Hirsch, 1980; Hughes, 1980). Although some response was made to these critiques (Gerbner et al, 1981), some doubts remain. Furthermore, the American - British discrepancy was reinforced in a more recent study by Wober and Gunter (1982). They found no indication of a relationship between diary measures of television viewing and fear of victimization among respondents, in the presence of statistical controls for certain demographic and personality variables.

Quite apart from methodological arguments, however, the theoretical position of the Gerbnerist cultivation perspective has not been universally accepted by mass communications researchers. An alternative view proposed by Zillmann (1980), for example postulates that, if anything, the effects of viewing crime drama on television should be the opposite to that indicated by the Gerbner group. Because there is little reason to expect people to view material which produces aversive states such as fear, and because television crime drama invariably features the triumph of justice - the bad guys are usually caught and punished in the end - individuals who watch these programmes should find comfort and reassurance through them.

Support for this position is provided by Gunter and Wober (1983) who found a positive relationship between beliefs in a just world and exposure to television crime drama programming. This finding

conflicts with the contention that viewing crime drama cultivates fear and mistrust and leaves open the possibility that what is cultivated instead (or in addition at least) are perceptions of a just world. It also leaves open the possibility, however, that those who believe in a just world seek to support these beliefs by more frequent exposure to crime drama on television.

There is another ingredient to perceptions of crime and the way they may be related to media experiences which has not been addressed by the Gerbnerist cultivation effects model - and that is the level at which judgments about crime occur. Tyler (1980, 1984; Tyler and Cook, 1984) has made a distinction between two kinds of judgements people make about crime. First, there are societal level judgements which refer to general beliefs about the frequency of crime in the community at alarge. Then there are personal level judgments which refer to beliefs about personal vulnerability to crime and one's own estimated risk of being victimised. Tyler found that these two levels of judgment were not related to each other on all aspects (Tyler 1980). He also found that societal level judgements but not personal level judgements, were related to media experiences. Estimates of personal risk were primarily determined by direct, personal experience with crime (Tyler, 1980; Tyler and Cook, 1984).

In the study that follows, respondents' television viewing patterns (measured in terms of proportion of viewing time devoted to different categories of programming in addition to overall amount of viewing) were related to societal level and personal level judgements about crime in locations both close to home and distant from it.

METHOD

Television viewing diaries and attached questionnaires were sent to members of a London Panel maintained at the time of this research by the Independent Broadcasting Authority's Research Department for purpose of routine programme appreciation measurement. Diaries contained a complete list of all programmes broadcast on the four major television channels (BBC1, BBC2, ITV, Channel Four) in London during one week in February, 1985. Respondents assessed each programme seen on a six-point scale ranging from "extremely interesting and/or enjoyable" to "not at all interesting and/or enjoyable". Endorsements thus revealed not only appreciation levels, but also how many programmes had been seen, and of which kinds.

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. In the first part, respondents were asked about their personal experiences with crime and perceived competence to deal with an attack on themselves. More specifically, respondents were asked if they personally had ever been the victim of a violent crime, and if they knew anyone who had been. They were also asked to indicate along a five-point scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" their extent of agreement with the statement "I could defend myself from an unarmed attacker". The latter item was presented with 11 items taken from or based upon Rubin and Peplau's (1976) Belief in a Just World scale. Some of these items were reworded in a more appropriate British idiom.

The second part of the questionnaire dealt with perceptions of the likelihood of crime and fears of personal victimization, and was divided into three sections. In the first of these respondents were asked to estimate along a five-point scale (ranging from "not at all likely" [1] to "very likely" [5]) the probability that a person living in any of five locations would be assaulted in their lifetime (societal level judgements). The five locations given were London, Glasgow, Cotswolds, Los Angeles or on a farm in the United States. In the second section, estimates were requested from respondents concerning the likelihood that they might themselves fall victim to violent assault (personal level judgements) if they were to walk alone at night for a month around the area where they live, in a local park, through the streets of London's west end, through the streets of Glasgow, or through the streets of New York. They were also asked to

say how likely they thought it was that they would become "the victim of some type of violent behaviour sometime in your lifetime" and that "you will have your home broken into during the next year".

In the final section, respondents were asked to say how concerned they would be for their personal safety (along a five-point scale ranging from "not at all concerned" [1] to "very concerned" [5]) if their car broke down at night in the English countryside, if they had to walk home alone late at night from a local pub, or if they found themselves having to walk through several streets in Los Angeles at night to reach their car.

A total of 448 usable diaries and attached questionnaires were returned giving a response rate of 47 percent. Data were then weighted to bring the sample in line with population parameters. The nature and distribution of the sample demographically are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Samples

		Sex		Age			Class		
	Total	Males	Females	16-34	35-54	55+	ABC1	C2	DE
n	448	218	230	183	139	126	211	130	106
%	100	49(48)	51(52)	41(36)	31(34)	28(28)	47(47)	29(26)	24(28)

Percentage figures in parentheses represent the known proportions for each demographic category in the London ITV region based on Broadcasters Audience Research Board (BARB) Establishment Survey figures for 1985.

Scoring

With regard to television viewing behaviour, each respondent was given a score for the total number of programmes watched in total and the numbers watched for each of nine different categories of programmes: action-adventure, soap opera, British crime-drama, American crime-drama, films, light entertainment, sports, news and documentaries/general interest.

On the basis of a frequency distribution of the total number of programmes viewed during the survey week, respondents were divided into three categories by amount of viewing: light viewers (32 percent of the sample), medium viewers (34 percent) and heavy viewers (34 percent). Light viewers were those who watched fewer than 25 programmes during the week, which on the assumption of an average programme duration of half an hour, is equivalent to less than one and a half hours per day. Heavy viewers were those who watched more than 35 programmes a week (or more than three hours a day), and medium viewers were those who fell in between light and heavy viewing limits.

For each programme type, relative proportions of total viewing time devoted to each were computed by dividing the number of programmes seen in a category by the total number seen overall. This was done to obtain a more precise measure of how viewers shared out their total viewing time among different types of programmes. Frequency distributions were then computed on these viewing variables so that respondents could be divided into light, medium and heavy viewers within each programme category.

RESULTS

Experience with crime and competence to deal with it

Direct personal experience with violent crime was rare among this sample of London residents. Only seven percent said they had ever been the victim of a violent crime themselves. Indirect contact with violent crime through knowing someone else who had been a victim was more widespread. Twenty-six percent said they knew a victim.

Further details are shown in Table 2, where a number of demographic differences in personal experience with violent crime can be discerned. Although men were only slightly more likely to say they had been victims themselves than were women, they were quite a lot more likely to know a victim. Age differences were apparent too. Younger people (aged under 35 years) were nearly twice as likely as older people to say they had been victims of an assault. Knowing a victim was equally likely across age-bands however. Directly experienced personal victimization was more commonplace among working class (DE) respondents than among middle class (ABC1) respondents.

Respondents had mixed opinions about whether they could effectively defend themselves against an unarmed attacker. Responses were equally divided between those who judged that they could defend themselves (32 percent), those who thought they could not (34 percent) and those who were unsure either way (34 percent).

Once again, as Table 2 illustrates, there were marked differences of opinions among individuals associated most strongly with sex and age. Men were nearly three times as likely as women to have confidence in their ability to look after themselves, while younger and middle-aged respondents had greater confidence than did older respondents.

Table 2. Personal Experience and Competence to Deal with Violent Assault upon Oneself.

	All	Sex		Age			Class		
		Male	Female	16-34	35-54	55+	ABC1	C2	DE
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Have you ever been the victim of a violent crime?									
Yes	7	8	6	9	7	4	6	5	10
No	93	92	94	91	92	96	94	95	90
Has anyone you know ever been the victim of a violent crime									
Yes	26	31	21	24	33	25	28	22	25
No	73	69	79	76	67	75	72	78	75
I could defend myself from an unarmed attacker									
Agree	32	49	17	39	34	22	35	32	31
Disagree	34	19	47	26	29	48	32	35	35
Unsure	34	32	36	34	37	30	34	34	35

Perceived Likelihood of Victimization: Others

Respondents were asked to estimate the likelihood that a person living in each of five different locations would become a victim of a violent assault during their lifetime. Results indicated that greatest risk was perceived to exist for people living in urban locations. Such locations in the United States however, held a great deal more danger than their equivalents in Britain. As Table 3 shows, the place seen as potentially the most dangerous to live in by Londoners was Los Angeles. Far fewer respondents perceived similar likelihood of a person being a victim of assault in Glasgow and central London. The locations perceived as safest of all were rural areas, both in Britain and the United States.

Women were more likely than men to perceive victimization as a likely occurrence for others across four out of the five locations. There was also a marked class differential, particularly with respect to perceptions of risk in the west end of London. Working class respondents were much more likely to perceive social danger for others.

Table 3. Perceived Likelihood of Victimization for Others During Their Lifetime*

	All	Sex		Age			Class		
		Male	Female	16-34	35-54	55+	ABC1	C2	DE
Likelihood of being assaulted for a person living in:									
Los Angeles	77	72	81	77	76	77	74	78	81
Glasgow	49	44	55	46	47	56	48	48	54
London (west end)	43	38	46	46	32	49	36	41	56
Farm in USA	11	7	15	13	13	8	10	9	15
Cotswolds	3	3	3	3	4	2	1	2	7

* Percentages are of those who, on a five-point risk scale, scored likelihood of assault as either 4 or 5.

Perceived Likelihood of Victimization: Self

How much danger did respondents perceive in the world for themselves? Results once again showed that perceived likelihood of victimization varied across different locations. The scenarios painted for respondents in this section of the questionnaire once again varied along one dimension in particular - their degree of proximity to where they lived. As Table 4 shows, perceived danger levels rose with increasing distance from home. Far and away the most dangerous place to walk alone at night, for this London sample, was New York. New York was perceived to hold real risks of personal assault for five times as many respondents as was their own neighbourhood. Few respondents perceived any real danger in their own neighbourhood.

Table 4. Perceived Likelihood of Victimization for Self.*

	All	Sex		Age			Class		
		Male	Female	16-34	35-54	55+	ABC1	C2	DE
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Likelihood of being assaulted oneself if walking after dark alone in:									
New York	83	70	87	85	81	84	84	81	87
Glasgow	53	45	59	46	55	57	49	58	52
London (west end)	41	33	53	47	38	44	33	50	57
Local Park	30	23	42	35	27	37	25	37	44
Own neighbourhood	15	10	19	12	11	20	12	13	21
Likelihood of being a victim in own lifetime	21	24	17	25	16	20	20	23	18
Likelihood of having home burgled in next year	23	23	27	20	22	36	22	26	30

* Percentages are those who, on a five-point risk scale, scored likelihood of assault or personal risk as either 4 or 5.

There were demographic differences in levels of perceived risk to personal safety. Across all locations, women more often perceived a strong likelihood of being violently assaulted than did men. The gap between the sexes was smallest with regard to perceived danger in the local neighbourhood, where it was reduced to nine percent. Age was not as consistently associated with differences in perceptions of danger to self across locations. The most marked difference emerged with respect to perceptions of risk in one's own locality, where older people more often thought they were likely to become victims than did younger or middle-aged people. Class was associated with risk perceptions for self, but only with respect to more proximal locations for respondents. Thus working class respondents were more likely than middle class respondents to mention the possibility of danger to self from violence in central London, a local park and in their own neighbourhood.

Fear of Victimization

How afraid were respondents of being victims of violence? To what extent did concern for personal safety vary with the location in which one might find oneself? Three items were presented dealing with fear of victimization. Results presented in Table 5 indicate that respondents said they would be most concerned for their personal safety if they found themselves walking alone after dark in the streets of Los Angeles. Real fear of being assaulted was mentioned twice as often for Los Angeles as in either of two other British locations. Respondents associated the least amount of fear with being stranded after dark in the English countryside.

Table 5. Fear of Victimization.*

	Sex			Age			Class		
	All	Male	Female	16-34	35-54	55+	ABC1	C2	DE
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Fearful of walking alone after dark in Los Angeles	87	61	81	67	67	84	69	69	81
Fearful of walking alone after dark from local pub	47	30	64	41	45	60	42	44	65
Fearful of being stranded in English countryside after dark	27	13	41	24	24	35	23	26	38

* Percentages of those who, on a fivepoint scale of concern for personal safety, scored either 4 or 5.

Demographic differences emerged associated with sex, age and class of respondents. Fear of personal victimization was most often mentioned across all locations by women, the elderly and working class respondents. Differences between the responses of men and women, the young and old, middle class and working class were quite substantial in every case.

Personal Experience with Violence and Risk Perceptions

To what extent do direct and indirect real life experiences with violence and belief in one's own ability to defend oneself against an assailant colour or mediate perceptions of social danger?

As the results presented in Table 6 indicate, whether or not respondents had ever been victims of violence themselves or knew someone who had been, made little difference to their perceptions of the likelihood of others being victimized. Belief about one's competence to defend oneself however, did make a difference. With respect to risk perceptions for people living in urban locations in particular, whether in Britain or the USA, respondents who felt incapable of defending themselves effectively were more likely to perceive danger.

Table 6. Personal Experience and Competence to Deal With Violence and Perceptions of Likelihood of Assault for Others.

	Whether been a victim		Whether know a Victim		Competence to defend oneself	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	High	Low
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Likelihood of being assaulted for a person living in:						
Los Angeles	75	77	81	77	63	76
Glasgow	53	50	55	48	40	54
London (west end)	44	42	44	42	38	50
Farm in USA	8	11	5	12	11	15
Cotswolds	2	3	4	3	4	4

One might expect personal experiences with violence to have a more substantial impact on potential environmental risks to oneself than in relation to perceptions of risk for others. The results, however, as shown in Table 7, indicate otherwise. In general, neither direct nor indirect experience with violence oneself differentiated risk

perceptions relating to self. The one notable exception was for perceived chance of being assaulted in one's own neighbourhood. Respondents who had been victims of an assault before were more likely than those who had not to perceive danger near to home.

Once again though, belief in one's own ability to handle trouble emerged as an important mediator of risk perceptions. Across all locations, local and distant, perceived likelihood of personal victimization was greater among respondents who had little confidence in their ability to defend themselves.

Two more estimates of personal risk exhibited stronger associations with personal experiences with violence however. Victims of violence were three times as likely as others to say they thought they would be victims of criminal assault during their lifetime. Clearly, and not surprisingly, the experience of victims had coloured their outlook. Indirect contact with violence, through knowing a victim, proved less powerful as a discriminator of perceptions. And so too, did belief in one's competence to defend oneself. Perceived likelihood of having one's home broken into was related in the opposite direction to the above perception to personal experience with violence. Victims were less likely to believe there was a good chance of being burgled during the next year. Perceived risk from burglary was predictably (given above findings) greater among respondents lacking confidence in their ability to defend themselves.

Table 7. Personal Experience and Competence to Deal With Violence and Perceptions of Likelihood of Assault for Self

	Whether been a victim		Whether know a victim		Competence to defend oneself	
	Yes %	No %	Yes %	No %	High %	Low %
Likelihood of being assaulted oneself if walking after dark alone in:						
New York	85	85	88	84	73	85
Glasgow	49	53	58	51	40	61
London (west end)	49	42	38	45	36	53
Local Park	30	34	29	34	24	47
Own neighbourhood	24	14	12	16	5	26
Likelihood of being a victim in own lifetime	56	18	25	19	21	27
Likelihood of having home burgled in next year	17	26	26	24	21	33

Personal Experience with Violence and Fear of Victimization

As Table 8 shows, respondents who had had previous experience of being victims of a violent assault were in general more concerned for their safety within each of the scenarios that had been painted for them. This factor made the most profound difference with respect to the most local of the three settings - the scenario in which respondents had to imagine themselves walking home alone late at night from a local pub. Indirect experience was a less powerful discriminator, although it did make some difference with respect to British scenarios. In contrast to direct experience, however, indirect experience with violence was associated with being less fearful.

The most powerfully related variable of all was belief in one's self defence competence. For judgements of concern for personal safety in settings at home and abroad, respondents who felt they could not effectively defend themselves against an unarmed attacker were more concerned about their chances of being assaulted.

Table 8. Personal Experience and Competence to Deal With Violence and Fear of Victimization.

	Whether been a victim		Whether know a Victim		Competence to defend oneself	
	Yes %	No %	Yes %	No %	High %	Low %
Fearful of walking alone after dark in Los Angeles	9	71	70	72	54	79
Fearful of walking alone after dark from local pub	60	46	41	50	31	73
Fearful of being stranded in English countryside after dark	33	26	20	30	18	46

Television Viewing and Perceptions of Risk

In examining the relationships between perceptions of risk to self and others, and of fear of victimization with television viewing, our focus in this paper will be upon amount of watching of serious drama programming, especially that which depicts crime. We begin our analysis with some basic comparisons between light and heavy viewers of television in their likelihood perceptions and degrees of concern for personal safety in different settings. These initial comparisons take no account of demographic differences in perceptions or differences due to personal experience with crime, which as we have already seen, are important discriminating variables. These variables together with other viewing variables are taken into account, however, in a series of multivariate analyses that were computed on the data. These are presented and discussed later on.

Table 9 shows percentages of light and heavy viewers of television in general, and for each of four categories of serious drama programming (action-adventure, soap opera, UK crime drama and US crime drama) who thought that victimization was likely for someone living in each of five locations. The difference in percentage endorsement of each item by light and heavy viewers is also expressed. The overriding pattern to emerge here is that heavy viewers tended to perceive victimization as likely more often than did light viewers. The best discriminators of response were total television viewing, viewing of action-adventure and most of viewing of soap operas. The one exception to this rule was amount of viewing of UK crime drama, for which light viewers most often perceived likelihood of victimization. This viewing variable was a fairly weak discriminator however, and it was only with regard to perceptions of danger in Los Angeles that any substantial gap developed between light and heavy viewers. Indeed, both categories of crime drama viewing were poor indicators of risk perception.

Table 10 presents a similar display for perceptions of risk to self in different locations. Patterns of responding were less clearcut here. One finding to emerge again was that heavy viewers of television and of soap operas perceived more danger in the social environment both at home and abroad than did light viewers. In comparison with these viewing variables, however, at this level of analysis, action-adventure and crime drama viewing were relatively poor indicators of risk perceptions. The most clearcut difference

observed was that heavy UK crime drama viewers were less likely than light viewers of such programming to think they would be burgled during the next year.

Table 11 shows the results for fear of victimization. The significant finding here is that television viewing proved to be at its strongest as a discriminator of perceptions. Heavy viewers of television and more especially of soap operas were most likely to express concern for personal safety in each of the three listed scenarios. Action-adventure viewing was a poor indicator of fear responses, but in contrast to likelihood perceptions, crime drama viewing emerged on this occasion as a much better indicator. This was true most of all with respect to fear responses in the setting which was closest to home for respondents. The result, however, was in the opposite direction from that observed for total television viewing and soap opera viewing. Heavy viewers of crime drama, it originated from the UK or US, were less likely to say they would be concerned for their personal safety if faced with walking home alone from a local pub after dark.

The above results suggest certain relationships between watching television or at least certain areas of programming, and perceptions of personal risk from violence and fear of assault in different settings and locations. Previous research has indicated, however, that relationships between perceptions of social reality and amount of television viewing can be substantially weakened in the presence of controls for demographic variables and other personal characteristics. (Hirsch, 1980; Hughes, 1980; Wober and Gunter, 1982).

In order to effect appropriate controls in the first instance for demographics such as sex, age and class, a statistical technique called multiple classification analysis was used. This technique enabled us to investigate the degree to which television viewing variables were related to individual risk perceptions while statistically controlling simultaneously for differences in those perceptions associated with sex, age and class. This technique can be particularly useful when, as in the present study, the factors examined are attribute variables that were not experimentally manipulated and therefore may be correlated (see Nie et al, 1975). This technique has been used previously with success in research of this kind (Hughes, 1980).

Once again, we focus on any significant relationships that emerged between serious drama viewing and perceptions of risk or fear of victimization. A number of significant relationships were found, some of which were linear and other curvilinear.

Table 12 shows the significant findings to emerge for relationships between television viewing and perceived likelihood of victimization for others in different locations. Two viewing variables were significantly related to perceptions of risk for individuals who live in London, and one viewing variable exhibited a significant relationship with the same perception regarding people who live in Los Angeles. Heavier viewing of action-adventure programmes was associated with greater perceived risk for people in London. British crime drama viewing was related to this same perception though not in the same way. Medium viewers of the latter programmes perceived greater risk than either light or heavy viewers. The perception of risk in Los Angeles was associated with levels of US crime drama viewing. Heavier viewers perceived greater likelihood of victimization, though it was medium rather than heavy viewers who perceived the greatest risk of all.

Table 13 shows relationships between television viewing variables and perceived likelihood of being a victim of violence oneself. Heavier soap opera viewers perceived greater risk in their own neighbourhood. Total amount of television viewing and soap opera viewing were related in the same direction with risk perceptions for a local park. Action-adventure viewing also emerged as significantly related to the local park perception, but in a curvilinear fashion. Medium viewers exhibited the strongest risk perceptions for this setting.

Perceptions of risk in London's west end were associated significantly with total television viewing and soap opera viewing too. In both cases, heavy viewers saw the greatest personal risk if walking alone after dark. Further afield, soap opera viewing was significantly related to perceptions of risk in Glasgow (along with UK crime drama viewing) and in New York in the same way as above. And finally, in connection with risk for self, heavy soap opera viewers were most likely to think they would be burgled during the next year.

Table 14 shows relationships between total television viewing and fear of victimization. The significant indicators were total viewing and viewing of soap operas. Heavier viewing in both cases was associated with greater concern for one's personal safety in the event of having to walk through Los Angeles after dark, or having to walk home late at night alone from a local pub, or if stranded in the English countryside at night.

The MCAs demonstrated that even in the presence of controls for demographic variables some relationships between television viewing and risk perceptions or fear of victimization persisted. However, demographic variables such as sex, age and class were not the only alternative factors observed to have a relationship with perceptions of crime. Personal experience with violence and belief in one's ability to defend oneself emerged as important indicators too.

Furthermore, when examining the relationships between certain kinds of television viewing and perceptions of social reality, it is important to control simultaneously for amounts of watching of other areas of programming. In order to find out if specific programme types were related to risk perceptions in the presence of controls for the effects of all such alternative variables, a series of multiple regression analyses were run in which ten television viewing variables, demographics, personal experience with violence (direct and indirect), belief in ability for self-defence, and belief in a just world, were related to each risk perception.

Table 15 shows the results for perceptions of risk for others. It is apparent from this table that in the presence of multiple statistical controls for other variables, few individual television viewing variables still exhibited significant relationships with perceived likelihood of victimization for others. None of the serious drama categories were significantly related to 'other' risk perceptions.

Table 16 presents the results for similar analyses computed for perceptions of likely risk to self in different locations. In relation to these perceptions, television viewing variables emerged more often and more powerfully as indicators of social reality perceptions. Viewing of soap operas and of UK crime drama predicted perceived risk in own neighbourhood. In each case heavier viewers perceived greater danger.

Total television viewing was significantly related to perception of potential danger in a local park and in London's west end at night. In both instances, heavier viewing predicted perception of greater risk. Finally, soap operas emerged as significant predictor of perceived personal danger if walking alone at night in the streets of New York and perceived likelihood of having one's home burgled in the next year. Heavier soap opera viewers perceived greater danger in New York, but less danger of being burgled.

Table 17 presents the results for fear of victimization. Heavier television viewing generally was a significant predictor of fear in all three scenarios. Throughout, heavier television viewing predicted greater concern for personal safety. With regard to the scenario closest to home, concern for safety when walking home alone at night from a local pub was also predicted by amount of action-adventure viewing and amount of US crime drama viewing. Heavier action adventure viewing and lighter US crime drama viewing predicted greater concern for personal safety.

Discussion

In a survey among London residents concerned with their perceptions of crime at home and abroad, it was found that perceived likelihood of victimization for others and for self, and fear of victimization for self, varied with location, demographic characteristics of respondents, their direct experience with crime, and confidence in personal ability for self-defence in the face of an assault. Television viewing patterns were only weak and inconsistent indicators of judgements about crime./

Although, at a basic level, there were differences between light and heavy viewers of television in general and of specific programme types such as action-adventure, soap opera, UK crime drama and US crime drama, which also survived demographic controls, in the presence of further controls for personal experience, self defence confidence, and belief in a just world, only a few reliable television predictors remained.

Unlike the findings of Tyler (1980, Tyler and Cook, 1984), no evidence emerged here that societal level judgements (e.g., percieved risks for others) were more strongly linked to media experiences than were personal level judgements about crime (e.g., perceived risk for self). If anything, television viewing variables were more often and more powerfully related to perceptions of risk for self. One note of consistency with Tyler, however, was the fact that personal experience with crime was an important predictor of personal level liklihood judgements and fear of crime.

In the presence of demographic controls only, one programme type emerged more often than any other as linked significantly to judgements about crime - soap opera viewing. There were few indications that viewing of crime drama was related to perceived likelihood of risk or fear of crime. And yet storylines in soap operas do not generally feature any strong crime emphasis. Since, in comparison with crime drama shows, soap operas generally carry few messages about crime, such relationships may represent evidence of selective viewing of soaps among individuals who already have a fateful and fearful outlook (see Wober and Gunter, 1982).

When additional controls were statistically introduced, three viewing variables remained significantly related with perceptions of likelihood of self victimzation and with fear of crime. These were total amount of television viewing, soap opera viewing and Uk crime drama viewing. The latter, however, was significantly related only to one perception.

Perceived likelihood of self victimization in one's own neighbourhood was greater among heavier than among lighter viewers of soap operas and UK crime drama. Greater potential danger to self in a local park in London's west end at night was connected with heavier viewing of television in general. Heavier soap opera viewing meanwhile predicted greater percieved likelihood of personal attack at night in New York, but lower perceived likelihood of being burgled.

Fear of victiminzation across three scenarios was greater among heavier viewers of television in general, and, with respect specifically to fear of walking alone late at night from a local pub, also with heavier viewing of soap operas.

Corroborating what was noted above, there was once again (with one exception) little evidence of any relationship between likelihood perceptions concerning involvement in crime or fear of self victimization and viewing specifically of content-relevant (i.e. crime drama) television programming. With respect to fear of crime, viewing of particular categories of programmes seemed to be less relevant than simply how much television is consumed overall. This may indicate that if television is the casual agent, it really does not matter which programmes individuals watch. Rather, it is general levels of exposure that are most significant. Alternatively, it could be that television is the affected agent, with viewing levels being influenced among other things by the fearfulness of individuals. /Those who have greater anxieties about possible dangers to self in the social enviroment, may be driven to spend more time indoors watching the box./

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Table 9. Television Viewing and Perceived Likelihood of Victimization for Others During Their Lifetime

	Total TV			Action-Adventure			Soap Opera			UK Crime Drama			US Crime Drama		
	L %	H %	Diff (L-H)	L %	H %	Diff (L-H)	L %	H %	Diff (-H)	L %	H %	Diff (L-H)	L %	H %	Diff (L-H)
How likely is it that a person would be assaulted during their lifetime if they live in:															
Los Angeles	75	78	-3	76	78	-2	73	82	-9	79	70	+9	72	77	-5
Glasgow	47	50	-3	49	54	-5	44	54	-10	44	42	+2	48	48	0
London (west end)	40	50	-10	36	45	-9	35	50	-15	40	37	+3	37	44	-7
Farm in USA	7	13	-6	9	12	-3	7	17	-10	13	8	+5	9	15	-6
Cotswolds	3	4	-1	3	2	-1	2	5	-3	6	0	+6	4	4	0

Note: L - Light viewers, H - Heavy viewers

Table 10. Television Viewing and Perceived Likelihood of Victimization for Self.

	Total TV			Action-adventure			Soap Opera			UK Crime Drama			US Crime Drama		
	L %	H %	Diff (L-H)	L %	H %	Diff (L-H)	L %	H %	Diff (-H)	L %	H %	Diff (L-H)	L %	H %	Diff (L-H)
How likely is it that you will be the victim of an assault if you were to walk alone at night for a month in:															
New York	79	87	-8	84	85	-1	77	88	-11	82	80	+2	83	83	0
Glasgow	51	56	-5	55	51	+4	44	57	-13	50	45	+5	56	47	+11
London (west end)	36	51	-15	40	42	-2	31	50	-19	37	34	+3	41	42	-1
Local Park	21	43	-22	29	28	+1	22	38	-16	30	25	+5	32	27	+5
Own neighbourhood	11	16	-5	15	12	+3	8	19	-11	13	12	+1	17	7	+10
Likely to be a victim in own lifetime	22	18	+4	20	25	-5	19	17	+2	19	21	-2	22	19	+3
Likely to have home broken into during the next year	20	28	-8	24	30	-6	25	19	+6	28	21	+7	25	25	0

Note: L - Light viewers, H - Heavy viewers

Table 11. Television Viewing and Fear of Victimization.

	Total TV			Action-adventure			Soap Opera			UK Crime Drama			US Crime Drama		
	L %	H %	Diff (L-H)	L %	H %	Diff (L-H)	L %	H %	Diff (-H)	L %	H %	Diff (L-H)	L %	H %	Diff (L-H)
Fearful of walking alone after dark in Los Angeles	61	88	-27	73	70	+3	10	77	-17	73	67	+6	70	65	+5
Fearful of walking alone after dark from local park	40	60	-20	46	43	+3	33	56	-23	51	38	+13	51	36	+15
Fearful of being stranded in English countryside after dark if car broke down	19	35	-16	27	24	+3	20	32	-12	25	23	+2	29	22	+7

Note: L - Light viewers, H - Heavy viewers

Table 12. MCAs Showing Relationships Between Television Viewing and Perceived Likelihood of Victimization for Others.

	Viewing Variable	N	Unadjusted Deviation	Et-	Adjusted for sex, age, class	Beta
Perceived risk for others if living in:						
	Action adventure					
London						
Grand Mean = 3.34	Light	156	-0.19		-0.19	
R = 0.26	Medium	138	0.06		0.03	
R^2 = 0.07	Heavy	154	0.14	0.12	0.17	0.13*
	UK crime drama					
London						
Grand Mean = 3.34	Light	115	-0.15		-0.16	
R = 0.26	Medium	205	-0.16		0.14	
R^2 = 0.07	Heavy	128	-0.13	0.13	-0.08	0.11*
	US crime drama					
Los Angeles						
Grand Mean = 4.13	Light	182	-0.16		-0.16	
R = 0.21	Medium	147	0.18		0.17	
R^2 = 0.04	Heavy	101	0.03	0.14	0.05	0.14**

Levels of statistical significance: ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

Table 13. MCAs Showing Relationship Between Television Viewing and Percieved Likelihood of Victimization for Self.

	Viewing Variable	N	Unadjusted Deviation	Et-	Adjusted for sex, age, class Beta	
Perceived risk for self if walking alone in:						
	Soap Operas					
Own neighbourhood						
Grand Mean = 2.15	Light	168	-0.33		-0.17	
R = 0.27	Medium	143	0.20		0.17	
R^2 = 0.07	Heavy	140	0.20	0.21	0.15	0.17**
	Total Viewing					
Local park						
Grand Mean = 2.80	Light	137	-0.44		-0.34	
R = 0.37	Medium	153	0.66		0.08	
R^2 = 0.14	Heavy	157	0.33	0.22	0.22	0.16**
	Action adventure					
Local park						
Grand Mean = 2.80	Light	154	-0.11		-0.13	
R = 0.37	Medium	139	0.33		0.28	
R^2 = 0.04	Heavy	153	-0.19	0.16	-0.12	0.14**
	Soap operas					
Local park						
Grand Mean = 2.80	Light	165	-0.41		-0.26	
R = 0.37	Medium	143	0.26		0.20	
R^2 = 0.14	Heavy	139	0.22	0.22	0.10	0.15**

Levels of statistical significance: ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

Table 12. MCAs Showing Relationships Between Television Viewing and Perceived Likelihood of Victimization for Others.

	Viewing Variable	N	Unadjusted Deviation	Et-	Adjusted for sex, age, class	Beta
Perceived risk for others if living in:						
	Action adventure					
London						
Grand Mean = 3.34	Light	156	-0.19		-0.19	
R = 0.26	Medium	138	0.06		0.03	
R^2 = 0.07	Heavy	154	0.14	0.12	0.17	0.13*
	UK crime drama					
London						
Grand Mean = 3.34	Light	115	-0.15		-0.16	
R = 0.26	Medium	205	-0.16		0.14	
R^2 = 0.07	Heavy	128	-0.13	0.13	-0.08	0.11*
	US crime drama					
Los Angeles						
Grand Mean = 4.13	Light	182	-0.16		-0.16	
R = 0.21	Medium	147	0.18		0.17	
R^2 = 0.04	Heavy	101	0.03	0.14	0.05	0.14**

Levels of statistical significance: ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

Table 13. MCAs Showing Relationship Between Television Viewing and Percieved Likelihood of Victimization for Self.

	Viewing Variable	N	Unadjusted Deviation	Et-	Adjusted for sex, age, class	Beta
Perceived risk for self if walking alone in:						
	Soap Operas					
Own neighbourhood						
Grand Mean = 2.15	Light	168	-0.33		-0.17	
R = 0.27	Medium	143	0.20		0.17	
R^2 = 0.07	Heavy	140	0.20	0.21	0.15	0.17**
	Total Viewing					
Local park						
Grand Mean = 2.80	Light	137	-0.44		-0.34	
R = 0.37	Medium	153	0.66		0.08	
R^2 = 0.14	Heavy	157	0.33	0.22	0.22	0.16**
	Action adventure					
Local park						
Grand Mean = 2.80	Light	154	-0.11		-0.13	
R = 0.37	Medium	139	0.33		0.28	
R^2 = 0.04	Heavy	153	-0.19	0.16	-0.12	0.14**
	Soap operas					
Local park						
Grand Mean = 2.80	Light	165	-0.41		-0.26	
R = 0.37	Medium	143	0.26		0.20	
R^2 = 0.14	Heavy	139	0.22	0.22	0.10	0.15**

Levels of statistical significance: ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

Table 13. (continued) MCAs Showing Relationship Between Television Viewing and Percieved Likelihood of Victimization for Self.

	Viewing Variable	N	Unadjusted Deviation	Et-	Adjusted for sex, age, class Deviation	Beta
Perceived risk for self if walking alone in:						
	Total Viewing					
London (west end)						
Grand Mean = 3.24	Light	139	-0.33		-0.25	
R = 0.34	Medium	153	-0.02		-0.01	
R^2 = 0.12	Heavy	155	0.31	0.20	0.24	0.16**
	Soap operas					
London (west end)						
Grand Mean = 3.26	Light	139	-0.33		-0.19	
R = 0.34	Medium	153	0.19		0.14	
R^2 = 0.12	Heavy	155	0.21	0.20	0.08	0.12*
	Soap operas					
New York						
Grand Mean = 4.39	Light	159	-0.24		-0.21	
R = 0.24	Medium	138	0.10		0.09	
R^2 = 0.06	Heavy	137	0.17	0.19	0.15	0.16**
	Soap operas					
Glasgow						
Grand Mean = 3.52	Light	162	-0.22		-0.08	
R = 0.21	Medium	138	0.08		0.07	
R^2 = 0.05	Heavy	137	0.19	0.15	0.14	0.12*
	UK crime drama					
Glasgow						
Grand Mean = 3.52	Light	111	-0.12		-0.13	
R = 0.21	Medium	200	0.16		0.15	
R^2 = 0.05	Heavy	126	-0.14	0.12	-0.12	0.11*

Levels of statistical significance: ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

Table 13. MCAs Showing Relationship Between Televisions Viewing and (continued) Percieved Likelihood of Victimization for Self.

	Viewing Variable	N	Unadjusted Deviation	Et-	Adjusted for sex, age, class	Beta
Perceived risk for self being burgled:						
	Soap opera					
Grand Mean = 2.65	Light	164	0.02		0.07	
R = 0.19	Medium	138	0.18		0.16	
R^2 = 0.04	Heavy	138	-0.20	0.12	-0.25	0.13*

Levels of statistical significance: ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table 14. MCAs Showing Relationship Between Television Viewing and Fear of Victimization.

	Viewing Variable	N	Unadjusted Deviation	Et-	Adjusted for sex, age, class	Beta
Concern for safety:						
	Total viewing					
Los Angeles at night						
Grand Mean = 4.04	Light	133	-0.32		-0.24	
R = 0.33	Medium	144	0.10		0.12	
R^2 = 0.11	Heavy	146	0.19	0.20	0.10	0.14**
	Soap operas					
Los Angeles at night						
Grand Mean = 4.04	Light	157	-0.35		-0.27	
R = 0.34	Medium	135	0.23		0.19	
R^2 = 0.12	Heavy	130	0.18	0.24	0.13	0.19**
	Total viewing					
Walking home from local pub at night						
Grand Mean = 3.25	Light	136	-0.37		-0.22	
R = 0.47	Medium	146	-0.08		-0.05	
R^2 = 0.22	Heavy	151	0.40	0.22	0.24	0.13*
	Soap operas					
Wlaking home from local pub at night						
Grand Mean = 3.25	Light	163	-0.49		-0.30	
R = 0.48	Medium	137	0.28		0.19	
R^2 = 0.23	Heavy	133	0.31	0.26	0.17	0.16**
	Total viewing					
Stranded in English countryside at night	Light	137	-0.39		-0.25	
	Medium	152	0.04		0.07	
	Heavy	153	0.30	0.19	0.16	0.12*

Levels of statistical significance: ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

Table 15. Multiple Regressions Showing Relationships Between Television Viewing, Personal Experience With Violence and Demographics with Percieved Likelihood of Victimization for Others.

	Risk for Person who Lives in:									
	London		Los Angeles		Glasgow		Cotswolds		Farm in USA	
Total TV viewing	.06	1.00	.02	.33	-01	-25	.00	.07	.02	.26
Action adventure	.11	1.43	-07	-87	.02	.31	-03	.43	-02	-30
Soap operas	.05	.87	.10	1.69	.01	.25	.06	1.06	.03	.51
Sport	-0.44	-.77	-04	-83	-05	-91	-09	-173	-01	.14
Light Entertainment	-04	-78	-09	-1.53	.04	.73	-05	-84	-10	-1.80
News	-04	-64	-13	-2.05*	-06	-99	.00	.02	-03	-45
Documentaries	-05	-89	-02	-35	-03	-63	-04	-82	-01	-19
Films	-03	-49	-05	.78	-10	-1.54	.02	.30	-01	-20
US Crime drama	-001	.10	.14	1.93	-00	.06	-01	.10	.13	1.82
UK Crime drama	.02	.28	-08	-1.49	.04	.68	-03	-60	-09	1.58
Sex	.09	1.68	.09	1.66	.07	1.38	-00	-02	.11	2.09*
Age	-00	-01	.00	.05	.10	1.92	-06	-1.02	-05	-88
Class	.14	2.84**	.05	1.00	.07	1.28	.13	2.57	.06	1.22
Just World	-07	-1.44	-01	.16	.05	-1.09	-01	.27	.02	.41
Been a Victim	-03	-50	-04	-79	-06	-1.12	-01	.27	.02	.41
Know a Victim	-07	-1.25	-16	-3.09**	-15	-2.16**	-01	-20	-12	-2.17*
Defend oneself	.07	1.40	.06	1.04	.04	.80	.09	1.61	.06	1.13
Mulitple R	.30		.31		.27		.23		.27	
Mulitple R^2	.09		.10		.07		.05		.07	
F	2.33		2.46		1.89		1.26		1.79	
df	17/399		17/392		17/398		17/399		17/390	
p	.002		.001		.02		ns		.03	

Levels of statistical significance: ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

Table 16. Multiple Regressions Showing Relationships Between Television Viewing, Personal Experience With Violence and Demographics with Percieved Likelihood of Victimization for Self.

	Own area		Local park		London west end		New York		Glasgow		Victim lifetime		Home burgled	
Total TV viewing	.01	.19	.13	2.33*	.14	2.55**	.08	1.41	.06	1.08	.06	.95	.08	1.36
Acting adventure	.05	.67	.04	.51	.02	.29	.01	.14	-01	-09	.08	1.07	.14	1.81
Soap operas	.12	2.10*	.06	1.16	.05	.82	.15	2.70**	.08	1.38	-01	-25	-13	-2.21*
Sport	-05	-97	-08	-1.68	-10	-1.92	-02	-45	-07	-1.38	-05	-86	-08	-1.49
Light Entertainment	-11	-1.97	-04	-74	-05	-90	-03	-51	.04	.76	-06	-99	-03	-54
News	-02	-33	.04	.76	-.04	-72	-02	-30	-04	-59	-07	-1.19	-01	-20
Documentaries	-07	-1.23	-03	-61	-02	-46	-00	-04	-06	-1.15	-04	-77	-03	-49
Films	-09	-1.41	-07	-1.18	-06	-94	.06	.92	-05	-84	-00	-01	-03	-54
US Crime	-08	-1.19	-01	-10	-00	-04	-00	.01	-05	-73	-07	-1.03	-08	-1.08
UK Crime	.11	2.07*	.04	.83	.02	.30	-04	-75	.05	.96	.01	.23	.03	.62
Sex	.05	1.03	.20	3.89***	.10	1.90	.11	2.07*	.02	.31	-07	-1.37	-03	-48
Age	.03	.55	-00	.04	-06	-1.13	-08	-1.40	.07	1.28	-05	-99	.11	2.03*
Class	.10	2.06*	.13	2.69**	.22	4.37***	.04	.82	.04	.72	.00	.07	.07	1.41
Just World	-.06	-1.23	-02	-41	-05	-1.03	.04	.76	-09	-1.77	-12	2.48**	-07	-1.37
Been a Victim	-02	-41	-04	-82	.03	.63	-01	-28	.06	1.19	-19	-3.59***	.00	.08
Know a Victim	.04	.85	.01	.20	-02	-32	-17	-3.19**	-12	-2.23*	.00	.08	.04	.68
Defend oneself	.15	2.83**	.13	2.62**	-09	1.65	.03	.53	.13	2.50**	.03	.54	.11	1.97*
Mulitple R	.33		.41		.37		.30		.30		.29		.25	
Mulitple R^2	.11		.17		.14		.09		.09		.09		.06	
F	2.87		4.79		3.78		2.23		2.27		2.19		1.53	
df	17/399		17/399		17/399		17/392		17/396		17/399		17/397	
p	.0001		.0001		.0001		.004		.003		.004		.08	

Levels of statistical significance: ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table 17. Multiple-Regressions Showing Relationships Between Television Viewing, Personal Experience With Violence and Demographics with Fear of Victimization:

	Concern if:					
	Stranded English countryside		At night in Los Angeles		Walk home at night from pub	
Total TV viewing	.11	2.09*	.13	2.23*	.13	2.51**
Acting adventure	.12	1.70	.00	.09	.14	4.02
Soap operas	.05	.97	.10	1.74	.08	1.52
Sport	-06	-1.20	-09	-1.65	-15	-3.15**
Light Entertainment	-01	.18	-06	-1.13	-03	-57
News	.00	.07	-06	-96	.04	-73
Documentaries	-07	-1.51	-07	-1.28	-04	-73
Films	-03	-54	.02	.75	-06	-1.09
US Crime drama	-11	-1.72	-02	-35.	-16**	-2.45
UK Crime drama	.03	.58	.01	-15	.00	.03
Sex	.31	6.42***	.15	2.88**	.28***	5.89
Age	.03	.67	.08	1.46	.08	1.60
Class	.14	3.11**	.09	1.76	.15***	2.23
Just World	-02	-37	-10	-2.02*	-00	-04
Been a Victim	-05	-97	-06	-1.24	-09*	-2.02
Know a Victim	.06	1.24	-03	-51	.06	1.34
Defend oneself	.15	3.14**	.08	1.53	.12**	2.50
Mulitple R	.51		.39		.54	
Mulitple R^2	.26		.15		.29	
F	8.35		3.90		9.22	
df	17/398		17/379		17/387	
p	.0001		.0001		.0001	

Levels of statistical significance: ** p<0.01, * p<0.05